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Skills needed by the elementary school pupil personnel worker may be divided into the following areas: (1) counseling, (2) consultation, and (3) coordination. The counseling role can be of value not only to children, but also parents and teachers. Consultation is the process used to help teachers and administrators become better diagnosticians of children's learning and the ways in which their own behaviors affect the facilitation of this learning. While counseling concentrates upon feelings, consultation concentrates on ideas, both the teacher's and the consultant's. Coordination is the process of relating into a meaningful pattern all efforts for helping a child. The counselor, working closely with teachers, parents, and the community, seeks to eliminate duplication of effort and to insure follow-through on decisions. Remedial counseling with individual children will cease to be the primary role, except as listening to children enhances understanding. (KP)

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THE PLACE OF COUNSELING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM

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I have been asked to discuss the place of counseling in the elementary school setting. I am broadening this topic somewhat because in looking over the program it seems that two other important areas, consultation and coordination, are being overlooked. These three skills constitute the major skills needed by the elementary school pupil personnel worker.

In 1966 the American School Counselor Association and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision hammered out a statement on the roles and training of elementary school counselors. This statement described the contributions which an appropriately trained child development specialist could make to an elementary school's attempt to give each child an optimal school experience. Generally in this statement, the counselor or guidance specialist was referred to as a child development consultant.

This title was probably chosen to emphasize two points. One, the new professional moving into the elementary school should be broadly trained in the behavioral sciences, particularly in child growth and development. While he may give somewhat more attention to children with specific learning disabilities or emotional problems, his focus generally will be upon all of the school's children. The professional worker will focus his attention on the school and its climate for learning as well as on the child. Secondly, the roles which this behavioral scientist will be expected to play will be much broader than is implied by the term counselor or guidance specialist. The aforementioned groups listed 27 major responsibilities for this type of elementary school person, only 3 of which focus specifically on the person's counseling skills.

The child development consultant or counselor will contribute his knowledge and skills through three processes: counseling with individuals and groups, consultation primarily with parents and teachers, and coordination of the efforts of the helping professions within the school system and in the larger community in behalf of individual children or groups of children.

The elementary school counselor should have a distinctly different role than that of the traditional secondary school counselor who has concentrated largely on getting students into the best fitting courses, and the appropriate college or jobs. The secondary counselor, often burdened with routine scheduling, clerical, and sometimes administrative duties, has typically worked with students on a one-to-one basis. While he has seen academic and vocational decision-making as important, he has envisioned the "promised land" as a job which would allow him time to help students individually with their personal, family, and social problems. Now that secondary counselors have been taking additional training, this training has tended to emphasize counseling skills.

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Counseling has played a larger role in the goals or "ideal world" of the secondary counselor than it has in his real or present world. This disparity exists because students and parents have tended to see the counselor as functioning in a relatively narrow area related to getting into the right courses and college. The Interprofessional Research Commission on Pupil Personnel Services (IRCOPPS) analyzed data from 5500 high school seniors in 28 New York school systems. Half of these seniors mentioned counselors as having been the persons who helped them most in learning how they compared with other students in their ability to learn in school, but when asked, "Who helped you most in developing your ability to get along with others?", half mentioned parents, a fifth, other students; about 8%, teachers; but only 1% mentioned the counselor. Similarly only 2½% checked counselor as the person who helped me most when personal problems have come up. If the elementary school counselor is to become a significant person in the area of counseling, he must find his own path. He should not follow the ineffectual pattern of secondary counseling.

Even though the concerns dealt with in counseling in the elementary school will be broader than has been traditional in secondary schools, in my view, counseling will never be as important in the elementary school as it has been in the dreams of secondary counselors. This is not to deprecate the importance of counseling skills. Counseling, in both individual and small group situations can assist children as they seek to understand themselves, meet the expectations of parents, peers, the school, and the larger society, learn effectively, and develop realistic and basically positive self-concepts.

Highly skilled counselors are rather rare in our society. Usually we react to people in rather surface ways. Traditionally Americans are realistic, action-oriented people more attuned to facts than feelings. Phrases such as, "If I were you", "On the other hand", and "You should", seem to come out more often than, "Your view is that", or "You feel."

The counseling role has been found to be of value to persons who are attempting to learn more about themselves and the personal meaning of events for themselves. A person capable of establishing a counseling relationship can assist children, parents, and teachers in exploring their feelings and their personal needs. He can help the other person set goals for himself and find ways of moving toward these self-set goals.

Let's listen to some elementary school children talk with an IRCOPPS interviewer about the counselor who serves their school. In this system this worker is known by the title counselor-consultant.

> "You can talk over your problems with him, such as different friends and do your friends treat you O.K."
>
> "We have a Student Council and we can talk over some of our problems there, but then there are more personal problems and you can take those to Mr. A. He won't decide for you -- He'll help you to decide -- just give you suggestions -- but he won't tell you what to do. I like this first of all because he doesn't have the right to make up my mind. And also you want a friendly man or lady to talk those problems over with. You just can't talk them over with just anybody because you don't have the courage to go to a mean person."

"The first time I went to see Mr. A. was in the second grade. I thought he was going to tell me what to do. I went in, and he says it looks as if this problem is pretty complicated, and I said, O.K. now tell me what to do. So he said, I'll give you a suggestion or two, but I can't work your mind. The student personnel is real good for understanding me."

" I came to Mr. A. about a problem I was having with one of my teachers. He told me to talk it over with the teacher and so he got me an appointment with the teacher. Me and Mr. A. and the teacher settled it. We talked for about 10 minutes and then it ended."

"The first time I saw Mr. A. I really didn't understand what he was for. I came for an appointment. I was talking to him about a problem I had, and all he did was talk. Well, he did help me, but he didn't give me the solution to my problem. I didn't realize that would help me until later when I came to him more often. I felt better about this when I came to him more often." "He doesn't give you the answers. That's really better than giving you the answers. I have to search and think about it myself."

You may be getting the idea that these pupils never arrive at solutions to their problems, but this is not always the case. For example,

"Well this girl was always following me around. I talked it over with Mr. A. He gave me some ideas and I thought about them and made a plan. I told her when she came up to me to go away. Then a new kid came into the school from Washington School, and she's gone after that boy and I didn't have to punch her in the nose."

I think that these examples do give us an understanding of the value of individual counseling for some children, normal children with concerns which seem big to them, concerns which sometimes interfere with their academic learning. The counselor makes it possible for them to learn more about themselves, their teachers and peers, and enables them with help to learn to become social animals.

These were highly articulate elementary students in a suburban area. They could verbalize their understanding of the counselor and his role and could talk to him man-to-man.

The counseling process must reflect the developmental level of the child. Sometimes children, particularly young children or children from families which are not highly verbal, must be understood and communicated with in non-verbal ways. Play materials sometimes facilitate this communication. Even without many words skillful counselors can often communicate that they care about the child and his feelings, that they are attempting to understand and be helpful, that they are non-evaluative. Changed behavior does not necessarily require verbalized insights on the part of the child.

Of course, sensitive teachers have sometimes learned to become skilled counselors of parents and children, but professionalization demands increasing role differentiation. Teachers are expected to become ever more skillful

educational diagnosticians. Their training has increasingly emphasized skill in a subject matters specialty and team teaching and other innovations are further changing the elementary school. The self-contained classroom is disappearing, and as it does so, often for very good reasons, the counselor may become the long-term godfather of the elementary school child.

Teachers are busy people, and this in itself often keeps children from using them as counselors. My own children sometimes write notes to their teachers because it is hard to get to talk with them. Before school the teacher is writing things on the board, at recess she wants a break for coffee and a smoke, and after school you'll miss the bus if you stay to talk to the teacher. When we asked elementary students what they did before they had a counselor in the school we were told,

> "Teachers had to help, and I think they were kinda tired of it. I think that it's better to have a counselor, someone who really is here to help us with our problems."
>
> "Before Mr. A. came you'd go to the teachers and usually they'd give you excuses, "I have to correct papers," "I have to do something with the other children", "I'm busy now, stay in for recess," "Come after school," and tons of more excuses I can't mention. She sorta cheated you out of it. And you hated to bother your mother when she was in the midst of cooking or something else. You go home and say, "Mom, I have a problem." "She's in the middle of cooking supper. She don't pay any attention." Then when Mr. A. came we had someone to turn to because he doesn't say, "I'm busy, see me after school; he doesn't leave and send you away when you have a problem."
>
> "Can you get to see him right away?"
>
> "Not right away maybe." "I have some appointments. Can you come tomorrow?" "He doesn't say, "Too bad. Come see me at recess."

As we have heard from the children themselves, the elementary school worker's skill in individual counseling can often be helpful, but in my opinion, spending most of the day in one-to-one counseling or play therapy should not become the goal of the elementary school counselor.

We will never have enough professional personnel to remediate all of the problems which families and schools can create or accentuate. A few upper middle class suburbs are trying to follow this path, but we will never have the personnel to provide this type of service to "everyman's" child. Rather, we must assist the adults who are in significant contact with you to provide a more adequate climate for learning. The insights gained by the counselor in contacts with children can give teachers, parents, and administrators valuable insights into the effects of their behaviors upon children. For this reason, if for no other, counselors should continue to work with individual children, but in moderation.

In the search for more efficient means of helping children and teachers, counselors have increasingly turned to small groups. In this setting also the counselor is attempting to establish an atmosphere in which self-exploration and problem-solving are facilitated. Group counseling can provide a major learning experience in human relations for children, teachers, or parents. In such groups children have the opportunity to react and interact with persons who are important to them. The counselor assists group members in examining their feelings and the feelings of others with care, and to value themselves and each other.

Teachers are the persons most responsible for children's learning environments. Counselors are members of the teachers' staff working in behalf of the child. If teachers can learn to handle effectively more of the minor and transitory problems of children in the learning and mental health areas by becoming better observers, diagnosticians, and general practitioners, counselors will cut their case loads to reasonable levels and will have time to counsel those who need individual assistance. There are several ways to achieve this end.

Consultation is the process used to help teachers and administrators become better diagnosticians of children's learning and the ways in which their own behaviors affect the facilitation of learning. Sometimes a teacher is very limited in his understanding of a child and himself as he relates to a child or the group. Pupil personnel services must help this teacher. The helping professions have never been very successful in taking a child from a classroom taught by an insensitive teacher and somehow making the child more teachable. A teacher in one school year spends more time with a child than you've spent listening to sermons in the last forty years, if you've not missed a Sunday.

In order to better understand the process and results of consultation in the elementary school, the IRCOPPS center at the University of Texas has been testing the efficacy of using elementary school counselors exclusively as consultants to teachers and administrators. The skills required to be an effective consultant focusing upon the child or the class are not greatly different than those involved in counseling. The consultants like the counselor must be a sensitive person. He must be capable of keeping professional confidences and must strive to be non-judgemental. He assists in the teacher's decision-making, but in a supportive role. He offers ideas but doesn't cling tenaciously to them. He realizes that he is in a helping relatic ship, not a command position.

The role of the clarifuing questioner can be very useful. "What do you see as the problem?" "Why did you decide to do that?" "What results did you get?" "What might you have done differently?" etc. Perhaps this is not counseling in that the consultant concentrates on what the teacher <u>thinks</u> might be done and what the results are likely to be rather than concentrating primarily upon the teacher's feelings, but the behaviors are similar.

Teachers also want ideas from consultants. They want other ways of looking at a situation; other behaviors which they might try. Those of us who are relatively new to school systems sometimes don't have much to offer, and when we do, great skill in human relations is necessary if we are to be effective. Never-the-less, the helping professions will increasingly make their primary contribution to the school through consultation.

If we accept the assumption that the enhancement of learning, not the correction of existing difficulties is the most effective and appropriate role for elementary school pupil personnel workers, it follows that counselors should actively seek out those with whom they feel that can accomplish the most, rather than wait for students to be referred. Our west coast center at Chico State College has been working with counselors who have decided to devote a major portion of their time to counseling with groups of parents and with groups of teachers. They are devoting time to group counseling with these adults because they think that this provides an efficient vehicle for intervening in the learning environment of children.

After a short-term workshop specifically training experienced counselors to work with groups, counselors leading groups of parents or teachers are assisted by group supervision approximately twice a month.

Parent groups have been set up to meet for four sessions on successive weeks tofocus on their children and the things which parents can do as individuals to assist them. When parents bring up matters of school policy or raise criticisms of specific school personnel, the counselor brings the group back to concerns with school performance, the impact of school on their child, or problems of parent-child relationships. Perhaps this accounts, in part, for the fact that teachers and principals queried did not see the counseling sessions as a threat to them.

If after four sessions parents want to continue the group sessions they can sign up for a second four sessions and later for a third or fourth series. While only one parent in nine reported changes in their children's behavior during the course of the first four sessions, two out of five of those attending twelve sessions reported changes. Over 95% of the participating parents indicated that they would recommend participation in a similar group to friends, and a majority perceived group counseling to have been helpful to them.

It was the success of these groups which led the counselors to make themselves available as leaders of groups of teachers focused on children and their learning. In a number of schools a majority of teachers came on their own time to participate in these counselor-led groups.

The third role of the counselor, which I shall mention only briefly, is that of coordination. This is the process of relating all efforts for helping a child or children with similar characteristics into a meaningful pattern. The elementary counselor is increasingly seen as the first line of defense in pupil services. Some problems are beyond his skill or it becomes apparent that long-term concentrated help will be needed to assist the learner. Then the counselor's prime role is to focus the school's and community's effort in the child's behalf, eliminating duplication of effort and its attendant confusion of parents and child, and insuring follow-through on decisions made relative to a treatment pattern. The counselor must work very closely with other members of the team: the teacher, parents, and community and other school personnel whose contact with the child are related significantly to the child. Again although the role is different, the skills called for to be a successful coordinator are not foreign to the effective counselor, and the most important of these skills is the ability to put the welfare of the child before everything else, even the printed job description.

In summary, counseling has been and will continue to be an important skill in the repertoire of the elementary school worker. As the school's

human relations expert, the counselor will listen intensively to children, parents, teachers, and administrators and assist them in working together in an attempt to make school a meaningful, satisfying productive atmosphere for learning. The counselor listens with the third ear, so to speak, and then attempts to facilitate greater communication about the child's learning and his emotional development. As counselors become more adequate observers of the school as a social system, they will spend more of their time consulting with the adults, but it will always be their job to understand the child through listening and observing. Increasingly they will come into the classrooms to observe. They will learn to work with groups of children, of parents, of teachers, and perhaps mixed groups as well. The skills they learned to use in therapeutic counseling will be important ones in the newer roles of coordination and consultation. However, they will no longer see remedial counseling with individual children as the primary role, except as the insights so gained will be used to assist the school in becoming a more adequate learning environment.

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